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## NEWS AND NOTES

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### MEETING OF THE NEBRASKA BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Nebraska District Number One Branch of the National Council of Teachers of English met in Lincoln on October 13 in connection with the sessions of District Number One of the Nebraska State Teachers Association.

"What Language Means to the Blind" was the subject of the first address, by N. C. Abbott, superintendent of the State School for the Blind. Mr. Abbott declared the common belief that when a person loses his sight his other senses increase in acuteness to be a grievous fallacy. More often, he said, the accessory senses are less acute, being injured by the same cause that produced blindness.

Difficulties in teaching language to the blind, as related by Mr. Abbott, are the numerous systems of printing used, the great cost of the books, the long time that elapses between the appearance of books and their publication in tactile print, and the size of the books. He showed his audience a copy of one of Shakespeare's plays, printed in Braille. It was only a little smaller than an ordinary encyclopedia volume. The Encyclopedia Britannica, in tactile print, would occupy four hundred volumes, he stated, and cost two thousand dollars.

Only exceptional blind persons can read as fast as persons with sight; they average half or two-thirds as fast, and cannot keep it up nearly so long. The fingers tire much more quickly than the eyes, and cold weather may also make the finger tips "blind." Another difficulty under which blind children labor is that the texts now in use have too much appeal to the sight.

Among compensations for these difficulties, Mr. Abbott listed first the fact that a blind person develops his memory much beyond that of ordinary persons. He takes few notes, but selects them with care. From eight to ten books a year are read aloud to the blind students. They are much better listeners than children who see, according to Mr. Abbott, because they have not so much distraction. He finds that they often carry on much discussion of their reading and that their conversation contains less slang than that of other children.

All the children in the school of which Dr. Abbott is superintendent are required to use the typewriter with reasonable accuracy and speed and are also taught to use the dictaphone. They receive intensive training in letter-writing, such as an ordinary school could not give. Once a week each student submits a carbon copy of one of his letters home for careful correction.

Miss Elsie M. Cather discussed "An Attempt to Meet Post-War Demands in Education," relating her experiences last year while teaching English in one of the Cleveland, Ohio, high schools where the faculty had gone back to older methods in a disillusioned mood. She stated that in this atmosphere where supervised study, project method, and socialized recitation were frowned upon, what she missed most was a democratic system of discipline. She also felt the need of supervised study and some classification of students according to ability. But the conclusion of her contrast of the two conceptions of education was that it is not methods that count fundamentally, but the personality of the teacher.

The accomplishment of universal literacy has left the world in the same place it was before in most respects, declared Professor Sherlock B. Gass, of the University of Nebraska, in discussing "The Will o' the Wisp of Literacy." He deprecated the vast amount of worthless printed matter that is now produced to meet the demand created by universal literacy. As a remedy he urged first the realization that in reading itself there is no virtue, and that the old literature is the only place to form taste. He advocates in the second place the separation of those who are fit for literature from those who are not.

Professor M. M. Fogg, of the University of Nebraska, was elected president of the branch and Miss Louise McNerney, of York, secretary. Miss Sarah T. Muir, head of the English department of the Lincoln high school, was re-elected director of this section. The recent division of the Nebraska State Teachers Association into six districts which will have no common sessions made it necessary for the Nebraska chapter of the National Council of Teachers of English, which formerly met with the teachers' association, to divide into six parts also.

DOROTHY JANE COLBURN

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

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#### SPEECH POSTERS

The poster exhibit, which was established a year or two ago, has had generous support and has been most popular. Schools and women's

clubs have contributed freely posters representing the best workmanship of their respective communities. The exhibit has traveled steadily, having touched all parts of the country. On account of the impossibility of meeting adequately the numerous requests for the exhibit, it seems advisable that the Committee on Speech revise its plans for the collection.

The following plan seems the best that the Committee can devise at this time:

1. Collecting the posters

Every community, school, club, business group, or individual actively interested in better speech observances is requested to send the best posters for use by the national committee to Miss Erskine (see address below). Each poster should be marked plainly with the name of contributor. The Committee promise to give credit always to the authors or contributors of posters.

2. Use of the exhibit

- a) Since the posters wear out very easily through travel, it seems advisable not to use the collection itself for exhibit purposes except on exceptional occasions, as in case of state association meetings, etc.
- b) Photographs of the posters will be taken and will be kept on file in the office of the National Council of Teachers of English for use in the speech campaign from year to year.
- c) The National Child Welfare Association, of which Mr. C. F. Powlison, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City, is secretary, have accepted the invitation of the Speech Committee to issue from the headquarters of this association at small cost, one or more colored posters, which may be used for the February observance of Better American Speech Week. Further announcements will appear in the next issue of the *English Journal*.

EDITH ERSKINE, Public Library,  
Blackstone Branch, Chicago

CLAUDIA E. CRUMPTON,  
Hutchins Intermediate School,  
Detroit

*Subcommittee on Posters, American  
Speech Committee*

## FEBRUARY SPEECH WEEK

The observance of November 6-11 as first Better Speech Week, this year, seemed to be widespread and well executed by those in charge locally. Numerous programs, newspaper accounts, and other evidences of observance has come to the Committee on American Speech. Greatest interest, this year, seemed to be located in the far West and the South. The reports from Mrs. Katharine Knowles Robbins show that the week was stressed by the General Federation of Women's Clubs, also.

The second Better Speech Week dates are February 19-24. Just as the Week last month included a day of national significance so will the next Week offer a day of especial importance, February 22.

It is the wish of the committee to see more emphasis placed upon speech improvement throughout the school year. This second Week will provide occasion for increased effort in this direction. Remember—you should report the details of your observance, if not too inconvenient, to the Chairman of the Committee.

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## WORD POSTERS

We had made Good English posters, but only the most artistic were used, and they were the studied efforts of both teachers and pupils. Our word-poster exhibit, however, was a representative effort in which all could have a part because the artistic effect was secondary in importance, the word sense being first.

The teachers of English asked the pupils to make posters of stated uniform size in which they made clear by pictures and short printed sentences the different spellings and meanings of homonyms and of any confusing words which troubled them.

One boy illustrated the difference between "emigrant" and "immigrant" by a picture of an outgoing and an incoming ship, the emigrants waving "good-bye" and the eager immigrants saying "Hello."

Those pupils who could not draw well used gaily colored pictures cut mostly from the advertising pages of magazines. The difference between "desert" and "dessert" and "wait on" and "wait for" can be told very realistically by pictures. "Raise" and "rear," "this kind" and "these kinds," "accept" and "except," "affect" and "effect," "principle" and "principal," "receipt" and "recipe," "like" and "love," and scores of other words lend themselves to illustration with good effect.

At the close of two weeks hundreds of these posters had been made. We then displayed them in the halls and awarded prizes for the best ones. They were reviewed and discussed with great interest apparently. Although the poster idea is not a new one, all of us felt that this particular exhibit was an effective, graphic way of teaching the spelling, the meaning, and the use of words.

EVALINE HARRINGTON

CRESTVIEW JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
COLUMBUS, OHIO

## THE PERIODICALS

### THE AMERICAN COLLEGE

A searchlight is playing at last upon our colleges from without and from within. The arresting article already noticed in the *English Journal*, "Who Shall Go to College?" is one of a score of trenchant papers in October and November publications, all of which might be given the common title, "Why the College at all?"

### THE BREAKDOWN OF THE CURRICULUM

A remarkable unanimity not only in the admission that an emergency confronts the higher institutions of the country but in the analysis of the character of the emergency is to be found in the Supplement to the *New Republic* for October 25. Ten well-known professors,<sup>1</sup> five from Eastern and five from Western schools, discuss "The American College and Its Curriculum." In their unanimity and in the quality of the remedial experiments reported lies the hope of the situation—a needed hope, since the outcome of the discussion of present conditions amounts to a confession of bankruptcy.

An editorial in the regular issue of the same date summarizes the discussion. Questions of curriculum depend upon questions of aim. Answers to these questions in their turn depend upon the historical development of the college and on its relation to the public. The fundamental influence on the first has been in recent years the development of science, in the second the development of democracy. Science brought about the elective system, and our conceptions of democracy gave it a specious justification. Remedies proposed for the resultant evils are summarized under three heads. First, the limitation of election by group

<sup>1</sup> The ten are President Meiklejohn of Amherst, President Chase of the University of North Carolina, Professor Alexander, of Nebraska, Professor Vernon, of Carleton, Professor Karl Young, of Wisconsin, President Burton of Michigan, President Neilson of Smith, Professor S. P. Sherman, of Illinois, Professor John Erskine, of Columbia, and Professor C. H. Moore, of Harvard.

requirements aimed to effect a balance between humanistic and professional studies and thereby to promote both concentration and distribution. Second, the survey course, fashioned to avoid superficiality or exploitation for profit. Suggestions to this end are that the survey be of an analytic nature "supplying the student with a tool rather than with a map" and that its inauguration be accompanied by a tutorial system and by co-operative organization of the students in the course. Third, an examination on each subject, placed toward the close of the student's college residence, based not on any particular course or set of courses but on the subject itself and calling for proof of reading, thought, and reasoning power on the part of the student. The Columbia Course in General Honors is held to be the most complete illustration of this third type of reform. In the examinations of last year, thirty-four men did not graduate because of failure here though they had passed all course tests. Similar plans have been used or are at present under consideration in other institutions, East and West. The most formidable demand made by these articles upon the faculties of colleges is the working out of a constructive philosophy of education to be the basis for the organization of curricula and the establishment of personal relations between teacher and student. In terms of the student body, the crucial problem is the limitation of enrollment. In this connection the article by Mr. Boas already referred to is particularly significant.

#### THE NEW HEREDITY

A number of the problems stated or implicit in the symposium of college professors appear again in the article by Vernon Kellogg in the November *Atlantic* entitled "The New Heredity." Discussion of the development of knowledge of the laws of heredity and environment as they function in human life, brings the writer to an application of his conclusions to the school and particularly to the college. The principal fault with our present system of education is blindness to inherited differences in individual capacity. In the college, administrators and professors devote themselves largely to holding backward and average and forward students to the same work and standards. Mr. Kellogg closes with a recognition that the colleges are awaking to the situation.

#### DOUBLE-DEALING IN COLLEGE GAMES

The same number of the *Atlantic* carries an article by President Meiklejohn of Amherst, "What Are College Games For?" The answer to the query is, they are for pure sport, and nothing else. The two primary motives of college sport are first the desire for fun, the joy of

competition, and secondly, the desire for victory. To the detriment of the games and of the values of these primal responses, college authorities foist upon athletics various spurious motives—advertisement of the several institutions, the huge financial profits of the games, the elaborate systems of direction and administration by Boards of Control and coaches which sap the initiative and resourcefulness of the young men and remove from them in large degree responsibility for the losing or the winning of the games.

#### STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF A JEWISH-AMERICAN

The avowed object of this autobiographical sketch, "Youth Grows Young," by Sampson Raphaelson in the November *Century*, is to trace the effect of the education given by America, in school and out, upon such a person as the writer, a young man with a "flickering of talent" and his way to make. Incidentally, it is a keen, unembittered, but relentless analysis of college training that did not train—despite an illuminated experience through personal contact with two great teachers—and of the failure of teachers to meet the need of a youth important because of the masses of his type that our American civilization is set to produce, and to handicap.

#### METHODS IN TEACHING LITERATURE

Allan L. Carter presents in the October issue of the *Educational Review* a college professor's answer to the question: How shall Shakespeare be taught in the high schools? At present the college students are afraid of Shakespeare, even those who elect further courses in English avoiding his work. This is due not to faults in Shakespeare but to wrong training the pupils have had. This in turn is probably due to the secondary-school teacher's acceptance of a traditional method as a necessary accompaniment of the traditional college-entrance requirement. Unfortunately the high-school class exercise is too largely the teacher's sermonizing upon Shakespeare as a text, and thus boredom and Shakespeare become synonymous. The proper aim of the Shakespeare class is to help the children to understand and enjoy the plays. Interpretative criticism, too, should be laid aside. In order to accomplish this the teacher of English must know Elizabethan life and must be willing to permit a considerable amount of dramatization.

Very much the same point of view is taken by Professor Robert Max Garrett in his paper, "Burning a *Pons Asinorum*" in the *Intermountain Educator* for October, 1922. Literature is something more than an adjunct to the social studies; it is life itself. Students going to college



fail to grasp the total significance of a poem and do not appreciate poetry. The high-school teacher of literature, whom her pupils frequently both love and admire, fails to make literature attractive because she teaches too much *about* literature and, for the sake of thoroughness, insists upon too much minute dissection and critical interpretation. There are comparatively few questions to be asked or remarks to be made about the perfect piece of literary art. Very frequently the one who is most struck by a piece is least able to explain it.

#### THE UPPER TENTH

The *Educational Review* for October contains George S. Counts' exposition of "The Social Purpose of the Education of the Gifted Child." The opposition to special measures for the education of the gifted is mistaken in that it overlooks the natural inequalities of man. These gifted children are our most precious asset, but they may become our greatest danger. The usual enrichment and deepening of the curriculum for special groups of superior ability is not sufficient. We ought also to take especial pains to develop in them the correct social attitude. In vocational guidance it is not desirable to turn all children of superior ability into occupations open only to such, because this procedure will eventually leave some occupational groups with no leaders and these groups will almost inevitably be exploited by the more able. This would be undemocratic and socially unprofitable.

#### WHAT NEXT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

To this query Thomas H. Briggs gives in the *School Review* for September a very satisfactory answer. At present our schools are hopelessly inefficient, as he shows by results of tests. These poor results are chiefly due to the indefiniteness of our aims. The justification for public education at state expense is the perpetuation and promotion of the interests of the state. In considering the inclusion of any subject-matter in our courses we should ask this question: Will it contribute to the perpetuation and strengthening of the state? "The aim of secondary education is to fit each person to contribute the most possible to the social welfare. The elementary school has given the rudiments of all subjects, but now comes the time for individual preparation. Incidentally, the writer quotes from Terman's article in the *Scientific Monthly* for January, 1922, the fact that a certain college student of 12.5 years mental age equals in intelligence 30 per cent of our white voters, 40 per cent to 50 per cent of our unskilled laborers, and 95 per cent of our adult American negroes. With such wide variation in abilities and in tastes we shall

have to provide widely varying opportunities in the secondary school. As guides for the making of new programs he proposes that we shall (1) teach the children to do better what they would do anyway; (2) reveal and make desired and possible higher types of activity; and (3) so arrange courses that they will be profitable to students who do not complete them.

#### INTER-SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE

Recently several schools have written to the *English Journal* asking for the names of other schools in different sections of the country willing to enter into class correspondence. Inasmuch as the Junior Red Cross has made itself an agency for supplying just this sort of information, it seems best for the *Journal* and the Council to keep out of the field. Write directly to the Junior Red Cross, Washington, D.C., explaining your wishes, or if you wish to know more of their plan, send for *American Red Cross Document 618*, Supplement II. They will find your foreign correspondents, too, if you wish.

#### TWO SPEECH PLAYS

The Committee on American Speech last year recommended *Mamie Decides*, a play by Miss Evaline Harrington, of Crestview Junior High School, Columbus, Ohio. The demand has exhausted the original mimeographed supply and compelled the printing of the play, which is now being distributed by Miss Harrington at twenty-five cents. Commercial departments and commercial high schools will find the play particularly usable.

The October issue of the *Bulletin of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English* is devoted to a better speech pageant. Inasmuch as it is composed largely of quotations from standard literature, it is better than most such productions that have been offered. The *Bulletin* may be obtained from Professor Harry G. Paul, Urbana, Illinois, for ten cents.

#### THE NEW YORK BULLETIN

The New York State Association of Teachers of English last year started the publication of a bulletin. Number 4 of Volume II, for November, 1922, is particularly good. The two leading articles, on "Objectivity in English" and "A Baker's Dozen" (of teaching devices) cannot be compressed into such space as to be reported in our periodical summaries. Enthusiastic teachers will do well to send fifty cents for a year's subscription (four numbers) to James M. Spinning, West High School, Rochester, New York.